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ABSTRACT

Twelve instructional leadership publications that have previously been entered in the ERIC system were selected for annotation in this booklet. Several articles concern the leadership role of the principal, its definition, and how principals can become leaders. More specifically oriented entries address the role of administrator leadership in improving students' reading skills, teaching composition, and promoting teacher effectiveness. Information for ordering copies of the items reviewed is supplied. (MLF)

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Number 67, January 1983

# THE BEST OF ERIC

## ON EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

*The Best of ERIC* presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

The selections are intended to give educators easy access to the most significant and useful information available from ERIC. Because of space limitations, the items listed should be viewed as representative, rather than exhaustive, of literature meeting those criteria.

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# Effective Instructional Leadership

1 **Cawelti, Gordon.** "Effective Instructional Leadership Produces Greater Learning." *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, 9, 3 (January 1980), pp. 8-9. EJ 217 730.

Recent models of leadership, despite their differences, have singled out two fundamental components of effective leadership. These are "task behaviors," which the leader uses to "structure" the work environment by setting goals, clarifying job descriptions, and so forth, and "relationship behaviors," which are used to motivate people. "Effective leaders," says Cawelti, "are those who most consistently are able to apply the right mix of concern for goals and people." Besides having mastery of these behaviors, effective instructional leaders must have "process skills" in four areas. In the area of curriculum development, effective principals must know how to do needs assessment, set goals, select learning methods, and evaluate curriculum. They must also have skills in clinical supervision—such as developing observation strategies and holding "no-threat" planning sessions with teachers.

In the area of staff development, effective instructional leaders should be knowledgeable about how adults learn. And in the area of teacher evaluation, says Cawelti, principals "should focus on the characteristics of teaching that are substantive and minimize attention to long lists of what I call 'boy scout traits'."

Another perspective on effective instructional leadership has been provided by recent studies that have found significant correlations between student achievement and school characteristics. High-achieving schools almost uniformly have principals who display "strong leadership." In these schools, teachers and administrators hold high expectations for students, frequently monitor students' progress, have businesslike classroom management procedures, and present material at appropriate levels of difficulty. In addition, these schools have a "favorable climate" for learning and have students who spend larger amounts of "time on task" in basic skills areas.

2 **Cotton, K., and Savard, W. G.** *The Principal as Instructional Leader. Research on School Effectiveness Project: Topic Summary Report.* Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, December 12, 1980. 85 pages. ED 214 702.

Several major studies of educational innovation conducted in the sixties and seventies clearly indicated that the principal was a major factor in the success of educational improvement projects. These findings helped revive the idea of the principal as instructional leader.

A great deal has recently been written on this topic; indeed, the "principal-as-instructional-leader has become a 'buzz' term and a 'bandwagon' concept," say Cotton and Savard. Despite this interest, though, only a handful of studies have directly asked whether the principal's performance as an instructional leader has any bearing on school effectiveness. Cotton and Savard here review the general conclusion of seven of these "valid, relevant studies" and offer recommendations for administrative action in light of their findings.

All seven studies supported the hypothesis that "active instructional leadership on the part of elementary school principals has a positive effect on the academic achievement of students." Among the specific principal behaviors that promoted student achievement were clear communication of expectations to staff, frequent classroom observation and/or participation in instruction, communication of high expectations for instructional programs, and active involvement in planning and evaluation of the educational program. But effective principals, the studies found, didn't simply concentrate all their effort on instruction: each was also an effective manager of the building and budget.

Due to the dearth of solid research findings, Cotton and Savard recommend a cautious approach to changing the role of the principal. New principals should be trained to be instructional leaders, and job descriptions should indicate this emphasis. But districts should *not* attempt "wholesale rewriting of existing principals' job descriptions designating them as instructional leaders."

3 **Danley, W. Elzie, Sr., and Burch, Barbara, G.** "Teacher Perceptions of the Effective Instructional Leader." *Clearing House*, 52, 2 (October 1978), pp. 78-79. EJ 191 852.

How do teachers characterize effective instructional leaders? To find out, Danley and Burch surveyed 150 teachers in 50 schools. The teachers' responses "identified with remarkable consistency various categories of characteristics and skills that were viewed as being critical to the effective role performance of instructional leaders."

Personal characteristics and skills of effective principals included "showing genuine concern, understanding and interest in both teachers and students"; encouraging open discussion "without interpreting disagreement as disloyalty"; relating to teachers in a collegial fashion instead of as a superior; having both sense of pride in the school and a good sense of humor; and "being realistic and flexible in expectations of teachers."

Professional characteristics of the principal that were perceived as improving instruction included visiting classrooms frequently, providing support for teachers implementing new ideas and assistance for teachers experiencing difficulties, allowing "professional freedom for teachers to teach in a manner of their choosing," and providing "worthwhile inservice opportunities."

The teachers surveyed also identified numerous management characteristics of effective instructional leaders. Among these were "being consistent and decisive in policy administration," allowing teachers to participate "appropriately" in decision-making, following up promptly on problems and questions, and scheduling enough time for sharing concerns and ideas with teachers, instead of "getting together only in times of crisis or for information purposes."

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4 **Egherman, Davida A.** "A Short Course in Improving Reading Skills." *NASSP Bulletin*, 65, 449 (December 1981), pp. 75-81. EJ 255 136.

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Research has shown that three administrative behaviors have a direct bearing on successful reading instruction. First, effective instructional leaders clearly communicate to their staffs that reading ability is a high priority. Second, effective principals spend "an increased amount of time in classrooms observing reading-related learning activities and providing supervisory assistance." And third, these principals have enough experience and knowledge so they know what to look for when observing the instructional process.

Secondary principals do not have to be reading specialists, Egherman stresses, but "they do need to understand the essential components of reading." For example, reading instruction should help students understand underlying concepts and should deemphasize the mechanics of reading once these basics have been mastered. Students should be taught at a variety of levels (literal, interpretive, applicative, and critical) and for a variety of purposes.

While observing teachers in the classroom, principals should make sure that all teachers "structure classes to include a *prereading phase*, a *reading phase*, and a *postreading phase*." Egherman explains in some detail what teacher actions each of these phases should include, and then outlines methods for communicating the importance of reading ability to teachers. Perhaps the most effective technique is to demonstrate concern for reading success by frequently observing in classrooms and giving feedback. Other techniques are to "frequently impress on the teachers that they can have a signficant impact on student achievement," publicly and privately praise teachers who are doing a good job, and allow teachers to visit the classrooms of effective teachers.

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5 **Judy, Stephen N.** "Teaching Composition: What Can Administrators Do to Improve It?" *NASSP Bulletin*, 65, 444 (April 1981), pp. 18-24. EJ 243 814.

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If the prose of most of today's educators is any measure, the public schools have evidently failed to provide adequate instruction in English composition. With the advice provided here by Judy, however, school administrators can help reverse the decay of written English, no matter how badly they themselves write.

Judy first takes issue with the back-to-basics movement and its overemphasis on teaching grammar and rhetoric. Both theory and research indicates that a "process" approach to writing is in fact more useful in the long run. The process approach, explains Judy, "teaches skills that can be transferred to new writing situations rather than stressing mastery of a set number of writing forms that are often not applicable at all to new communications tasks."

Secondary school administrators can help improve writing instruction by strongly supporting programs based on research and theory, instead of implementing programs "developed to silence the complaints of parents who want education returned to what they fancy it was when they were children."

More specifically, administrators should support writing programs that are "based on frequent writing, not on workbooks, handbooks, and drill." Research has shown that writing is a learn-by-doing skill, so the more writing students do, the better. To further expand students' writing experiences, administrators should encourage teachers of other subjects "to see writing as something that should be taught and used in every class."

Administrators should also be extremely wary of standardized test scores as measures of program success. Students who do well on such tests are assumed to write well, but in fact most standardized tests take no writing samples. Finally, Judy recommends that administrators reduce class size for composition teachers to allow adequate amounts of writing to be assigned and corrected.

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6 **Kramer, Mary Jo.** *Applying the Characteristics of Effective Schools to Professional Development.* Manchester: Connecticut Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, March 1980. 30 pages. ED 210 322.

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"Conventional wisdom in American education maintains that family background and social class are the principal determinants of pupil performance in schools," say Kramer. But recent studies have shown that the effectiveness of urban schools is controlled not by social factors but by such school-based variables as strong administrative leadership, high expectations for student performance, clear goals with an emphasis on basic skills, frequent monitoring of pupil progress, and a safe and orderly school environment.

With this research as a foundation, Kramer asks the next obvious question: How can these findings be used to make schools more effective? In particular, what inservice programs for principals and teachers can engender high expectations and strong principal leadership?

Ideally, the principal is the "master teacher" of the school. "But if a principal cannot analyze a lesson and effectively communicate his/her observations to teachers," Kramer stresses, "then the staff and ultimately the children are denied the benefits of careful and constructive supervision." Thus, inservice training for principals should focus on helping them become better instructional leaders. Skills in classroom observation and teacher evaluation should be sharpened. Instruction and learning—particularly in basic skills areas—should be continually stressed as the focus of principal-teacher interaction.

Inservice training should also help principals become "adept in identifying the obstacles which undermine the accomplishment of stated aims and learning objectives." Kramer suggests presenting principals with case studies and actual school circumstances and asking them to develop remedial programs for a variety of problematic situations.

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7 **Pendergrass, R. A., and Wood, Diane.** "Instructional Leadership and the Principal." *NASSP Bulletin* 63, 425 (March 1979), pp. 39-44. EJ 197 82[illegible]

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It is clear, say Pendergrass and Wood, that principals must make a "come back" and become true instructional leaders. To do this, principals "must utilize a system of instructional design so that all tasks and activities revolve around the central focus, teaching and learning." Pendergrass and Wood here explain one such system of instructional design, which they call "Planned Instructional Emphasis" (PIE).

In the first step of PIE, principals study "the rationale and philosophy of the district and of the school" and develop a core of ideas to serve as the central focus of the instructional program. These ideas should include curricular objectives as well as sets of "philosophical and psychological screens." Screens, the authors

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explain, are positively worded statements used as criterions "for accepting or rejecting possible future actions."

The second level of PIE deals with the actual mechanics of the instructional process. In this state, principals establish high expectations for teacher and student behavior and make sure that the instructional program is based on sound learning theory.

Finally, in the third stage of PIE, principals turn their attentions to the "affect" of the instructional system. This stage includes such concerns as student success, teacher concerns and satisfaction, and organizational development.

When principals think of themselves as instructional leaders instead of as school managers, they focus their attentions on theories of learning, program supervision, and curriculum improvement. But this doesn't mean that school management should be forgotten. "It is possible," the authors conclude, "to place instructional leadership as first priority and work in a cooperative way with the teaching staff without denigrating effective management of the non-instructional aspects of the school system."

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8 **Pinero, Ursula C.** "Wanted: Strong Instructional Leaders." *Principal,* 61, 4 (March 1982), pp. 16-19. EJ 259 540.

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The idea that the principal should be an instructional leader is as old as the principalship itself, says Pinero, but unfortunately this concept "has seldom been supported in practice." Recent research, though, has lent renewed legitimacy to the importance of instructional leadership and has helped identify specific behaviors of effective principals. Pinero here discusses these behaviors and the history of the school effectiveness debate.

Effective instructional leaders, not surprisingly, are "actively involved in their school's instructional program." More specifically, they are knowledgeable about instruction, set clear goals for the instructional program, make these goals known to students and teachers alike, set high expectations for their students, and emphasize the importance of reading, writing, and other basic skills. In addition, effective principals "set expectations for collegiality and continuous improvement," model the kinds of behavior they desire, participate in inservice training with teachers, protect the faculty from "undue pressures," and use sanctions wisely to move the school toward its goals.

Finally, effective instructional leaders consistently give priority to instructional concerns by concentrating their effort on instructional matters and by delegating noninstructional tasks. These leaders, concludes Pinero, "make instruction and its improvement the central concern of the school."

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9 **Ross, John A.** "Strategies for Curriculum Leadership." *The Australian Administrator,* 2,5 (October 1981), 6 pages. ED 213 142.

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Despite the formal authority of the principal, well-documented studies show that "the curriculum decisions of teachers are virtually impervious to the interventions of principals." Extrinsic rewards such as public praise and resource allocation have some influence over teacher behavior, but their influence is relatively weak.

Given this state of affairs, how can a principal with instructional leadership aspirations ever hope to influence what goes on in the classroom? In this excellent article, Ross clearly explains how principals can in fact alter teacher behavior by offering intrinsic rewards, influencing teachers' norms and beliefs, and allowing teachers to participate in school decision-making.

Teachers derive their greatest intrinsic rewards from events that occur in the classroom. Yet instructional improvement projects imposed by the principal are often perceived as threatening these psychic rewards. To "neutralize the negative effects of change," Ross suggests such tactics as "providing guidelines for incremental adjustments to present practice" and "providing a consultant to demonstrate new behaviours in the classroom." Another effective strategy is to make the benefits of change obvious to teachers — not through objective evaluation data but through "anecdotal data from classroom teachers who have successfully implemented the recommended behaviour."

Principals fill a central role in the normative structure of the school. Through his or her own behavior, the principal clearly demonstrates the norms of the school and defines standards of professional conduct. Thus, a principal who demonstrates that instructional matters are the primary concern of the school will influence teachers to think likewise. Ross also discusses the influence that the wise use of participatory decision-making can have on teacher behavior.

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10 **Smyth, W. John.** "The Principal as an Educational Leader: To Be, or Not to Be?" *The Australian Administrator,* 1,1 (February 1980), 6 pages. ED 213 132.

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"To what extent," Smyth asks, "does the principal of a school provide educational leadership that has a discernible impact on the learning of pupils?" This question has not been clearly answered by educational researchers. But both intuition and the few studies that are available indicate that in schools where principals are closely involved with instructional matters students do better on achievement tests. One recent study, for example, found higher student achievement in schools with principals who "felt strongly about instruction," frequently discussed teaching with teachers, and took responsibility for coordinating the instructional program.

Observational studies of what principals actually do show that most have little involvement with the core activity of the school — teaching and learning in the classroom. Instead, principals are often preoccupied with "running the school smoothly and efficiently." In short, principals seem to be much more concerned with *administrative* matters than with *educational* matters, says Smyth.

This situation, though, seems to be changing. According to John Goodlad, says Smyth, "many educational administrators—in rapidly growing numbers—want to put education at the centre again, want to become educational leaders again, not mere managers."

If future school principals are to deserve the title of educational leaders, says Smyth, they will need to concentrate on acquiring new skills and a new orientation. They will have to learn that the classroom is the focal point of all activities, that the concerns and issues of teachers and students are the most important in the school, and that teachers must be frequently provided with objective feedback to improve the quality of their instruction."

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11 **Wilson, Ken.** "An Effective School Principal." *Educational Leadership*, 39, 5 (February 1982), pp. 357-61. EJ 257 926

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Research studies have identified some of the characteristics of effective instructional leaders. A list of these traits, however, is not in itself very enlightening. What are needed to flesh out these findings are more descriptive analyses of effective principals in action. Wilson here provides one such analysis—a case study of Principal William Corbett of Lowell Elementary School in Watertown, Massachusetts.

Corbett clearly demonstrates the prime characteristic of effective instructional leaders, which is, of course, intimate involvement with the school's instructional program. Although his method is quite time consuming, Corbett sits together with each child in the school twice a year and listens to them read a story of their choosing. He discusses the story with the student, "writes a note complimenting the child or suggesting an area for improvement," and asks the child to read the same story to his or her parents that evening.

In writing and math, Corbett employs a similar procedure, reading and correcting two math and two writing assignments for each student every year. The school's emphasis on learning is also communicated to students by the prominent display in the school's office and in the hallways of a variety of student papers and art work.

A knowledgeable and skilled staff is essential for a good instructional program. Thus Corbett exercises considerable care in selecting new teachers, looking first for "empathy and love for children" and then potential teaching skill. At each grade level, he strives to have at least two teaching styles. This facilitates the proper placement of students in particular classes, which Corbett undertakes himself each spring.

There is, of course, much more to Corbett's style than can easily be summarized here, but, as Wilson concludes, it is Corbett's "detailed monitoring of the instructional process, his constant awareness of and interest in the progress of individual students and teachers," that makes him a successful instructional leader.

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12 **Young, Betty S.** "Principals Can Be Promoters of Teaching Effectiveness." *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, 9, 4 (March 1980), pp. 11-12. EJ 221 572.

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The purpose of teacher observation and evaluation is to help improve instruction. But "if teachers' skills improve with observation and feedback, so do the principals'," says Young. This is the concept behind Vallejo City (California) Unified School District's four-year program of instructional supervision training, described here by Young.

In the third year of the program, principals are asked to make an audio or video tape of a teacher conference following a classroom observation. Young—the director of the district's Professional Development Center and a former principal—then analyzes the tape and meets with the principal to discuss it. During this session, Young and the principal explore ways of improving teacher evaluation, in particular, ways of strengthening the principal's own teaching ability.

The conferences not only build supervisory skills, they also build a kind of empathy for teachers: "the principal experiences the same need for sensitivity that the teacher feels in a principal-teacher conference," Young explains.

Next, Young goes to each school site and sits in on a teacher observation and the conference that follows. The principal's "lesson" to the teacher is again analyzed, and feedback is given so the principal can build a "repertoire of approaches to use another time." Often, the teachers also sit in on these sessions and offer their own perceptions of their conferences. "In this way," says Young, "the idea of principals and teachers as learners together" is strengthened. Young reports many positive results of this program, including increased trust and sharing between principals and teachers, more interest among teachers in instructional issues, better "climate" in some schools, and some evidence of increased student achievement.

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